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IV. Refutatio (51-68).

Partitio (51):	Tractatio (52-68):
1. Ipsa res ac ratio:	1. Ipsa res ac ratio
(a), (b)	sententias refutant
2. Auctoritates con-	(52-68)
trariae.	(a) Hortensi (52-
	58),
	(b) Catuli (59-
	68).
	2. Auctoritates con-
	trariae (68): Ser-
	vilius, Curio, Len-
	tulus, Cassius.

V. Peroratio (69-71).

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THE TEACHING OF LATIN COMPOSITION IN COLLEGE

The failures in college entrance examinations in translation from English into Latin, disheartening as they are, may be accounted for in part by the real difficulties of mastering one's first inflected language and by the crowded preparatory curriculum; they do not all indicate poor teachers, indifferent pupils, or unreasonable examiners. But what saving explanations can be given of the Latin which is written by the students who not only have passed these decimating tests but have also continued Latin in college? If these picked few, after seven or eight years' study of the language, do not express themselves in it with a fair degree of ease and correctness, can we feel much confidence in their ability to teach it to our future freshmen or in their own appreciation of its literature? The question of elective composition in college and university is therefore one of the highest importance for all who believe in classical studies¹.

I am not advocating prose composition for its own sake in either school or college, though it can be made a most valuable means of mental discipline, neither would I exalt linguistics at the expense of literary study. Much writing seems to me, however, the most efficient means of acquiring and retaining that exact, unhesitating knowledge of the mechanism of a language without which subsequent study, either linguistic or literary, is slow and dangerous.

The colleges have done something by insisting on translation into Latin in the preparatory schools and, generally, in the freshman year. They also provide one or more elective courses which are required for honors or a recommendation to teach. They fail, in my opinion, in not offering a *continuous series of writing courses of such a character that they will be taken fearlessly even by mediocre students*. Unfortunately, many of mediocre ability are destined to teach Latin under complacent or impoverished school boards, and even the most talented will soon be

guilty of impossible syntax and forms like *faciebitur* or *potabarentur*, if they cease using their knowledge. A language can not be learned once for all; power to speak or write it vanishes without constant practice. To illustrate this fact I have more than once experimented on similar groups of juniors or seniors. Those who have written no Latin since their freshman year require from three to five hours with the aid of grammar and dictionary to turn a simple passage based on Caesar into very bad Latin; others, equal in ability and extent of reading, who have had a weekly hour of composition, can translate the same piece at sight in twenty minutes, making about one-sixth as many mistakes. Even a 'C' student can learn to write decently without excessive effort, yet at present 'Latin prose' has so bad a name in many places that only the cleverest and most ambitious will take more than the minimum, while those who most need its training least often persevere till it ceases to be drudgery.

In what ways, then, can composition be made more popular as an elective with those who already like Latin? First of all, we must ourselves believe in it and lose no opportunity of explaining the reasons for our belief. Then we should make admission to the class an honor, carrying with it some privilege or exemption. We should promise to pass anyone whom we admit who will spend the required time according to our directions; we should agree to give good marks for effort and improvement regardless of the absolute standard attained. Finally, having ensnared our pupils, we must set tasks so well within their powers that praise can justly be given to the results of their labor. If, on the other hand, we demand four, six, or eight hours of preparation of an hour's credit and then mark severely by a Ciceronian standard, we can scarcely wonder at our present unpopularity. Easy lessons extending over two or three years are more profitable than unreasonably hard ones, followed by discouragement and cessation of effort after a single term. There is no danger that composition in any foreign language will be made too easy!

¹ Much of the following discussion naturally applies also to Greek, in which similar methods are, or may be, used.

How can the exercises be made less difficult without unduly sacrificing length or interest, variety or idiom? I should like to suggest examining our accumulated stock, rejecting those which do not meet the three following qualifications:

(1) *The English should be entirely clear to the student after one attentive reading.* Some of our favorite passages, in use for a generation or more, are sufficiently archaic in diction to cause delay; others are unintelligible from lack of context; still others deal with British or Greek history and institutions which are less familiar to American youths than to the English schoolboys for whom they were originally intended. Now, desirable as it is for undergraduates in this country to know Plato, Bacon, or the history of the British in India, it is manifestly unwise to teach these subjects piecemeal in a Latin classroom. Our colleagues in modern language departments are wiser in basing their composition and conversation on daily life and on the French and German books in hand.

(2) *A Latin model should be supplied in advance.* This is done in preparatory work, which, except for mere grammatical drill, consists largely of variations on the texts read. Such an arrangement, however, is practicable in college only when all the members of a composition class are also studying the same prose author. If, as is usually the case, the writing course must be complete in itself, the exercises should be similar in tone to some well known Latin book and, if possible, accompanied by further private or sight reading. Otherwise, even a bright class will be driven to despair by ineffectual struggles with unsuitable tasks that in themselves are of the simplest. Suppose, for example, we ask for a discussion of friendship or duty from one who chances not to have read any of Cicero's essays, or an appreciation of Horace from one ignorant of the Brutus and the tenth book of Quintilian; where can such a one get the needed philosophical or critical vocabulary except in the English-Latin lexicon? In our zeal for logical discipline we too often forget that the process of composition should be partly imitative—freehand drawing from a model rather than making patchwork from printed directions.

Again, a striving for variety—or a lack of system—sometimes groups together good exercises so diverse in vocabulary and setting that the conscientious pupil has no chance to practice the idioms which he has just mastered. If, on the other hand, a considerable number of exercises in succession deals with the same subject, the corrected version of each one will guide following attempts.

(3) *The subject matter of the exercises should be valuable.* Just as we expect considerable information about a language to be an incidental result of studying its literature, so we can convey some new

notions of life and books through what is primarily a writing course. The minute attention required for the learner to turn a page into Latin and to see the superiority of the 'fair copy' to his own faulty one ought to make him master of both thought and language. Hence, if the ideas are worth while in themselves and not too unrelated to his other knowledge, a mere fraction of the class hour will suffice to give them meaning. Cicero's philosophy or the facts of Caesar's quarrel with Pompey can be learned from translating English quite as well as from translating Latin, provided that the English paragraphs are given consecutively and equal stress is laid on the meaning. Far from losing by a division of interest, the language will, as a matter of fact, be better impressed on the memory if it is looked upon as a means of communicating thought and not simply as apparatus for mental gymnastics. Far too much of the material in the current manuals consists of trivial anecdotes—and anecdotes are hard to tell effectively in one's native language—or of brief extracts which are vague and incomplete unless one has a familiarity with the context. Longer and more solid pieces seem to the student more worthy of his best efforts. No undergraduate, for example, would despise the knowledge of Cicero's Brutus obtainable from a series of ten passages from or about that work, but the average sophomore does feel decided scorn for the chaotic jumble of Macaulay and Aristotle, Montaigne and Darwin, Theophrastus and St. Augustine, which is often set before him.

This last point, it seems to me, lies at the root of the whole matter; let the student have something worth saying and he will learn to say it. Give to the exercises in composition intrinsic value, continuity of interest, connection with other pursuits, and the hours of necessary labor will be pleasant as well as fruitful. For a time, it is true, attention must be concentrated on a single style and subject, but with increasing skill may come greater variety.

Let me turn now to definite suggestions, which, while they contain little that is new, may perhaps have some value as a record of several years of experimenting. In an elective writing course covering two or more years¹, my best results have been obtained as follows. About half the time is devoted to retranslating versions of important long selections from Latin writers, a fourth to translating shorter pieces from English originals on related subjects, and a fourth to conversation and composition in Latin. The exercises, regardless of type, are generally grouped together on the basis of their contents or authorship. The first draft is always to be written at sight. The original of retranslations is

¹ For all but exceptionally well-prepared freshmen a systematic review of syntax with accompanying practice in writing would be a necessary preliminary.

taken down from dictation before being discussed, is afterwards committed to memory, recited, and constantly reviewed. Criticism is constructive rather than destructive. The final examination, while allowing some choice, covers both form and content of the Latin studied, and in the more advanced classes includes both translation and composition.

Retranslation is avoided by some teachers for fear that students will find and use the original. Although local conditions differ, those who of their own choice elect Latin composition generally expect to work and can be trusted to work honestly. A more serious objection may be brought on the ground of poor English in the translation. But we have to tolerate a good deal of 'translation English' in reading courses, and, at the worst, our English versions of Cicero will probably do no more harm than our Latin versions of Gibbon. Then, too, a faint suggestion of Latin style in the phrasing saves telling many an idiom outright in footnote or red-ink commentary. Above all, the work has an air of reality, it seems 'practical'; at the end of a semester the students know thoroughly some ten pages of real Latin.

Translation from English authors, a far harder task, should be postponed until the class is well in hand and consciously improving. Otherwise, the lessons must be short and discouraging. For certain purposes, however, such as illustrating differences in the use of figurative language, no better instrument can be devised.

Composition directly in Latin, after two or three attempts, is easier than translation and, though in a different way, quite as instructive. Its chief value is in arousing interest and helping to bring about a natural use of the language. At first I assign very simple subjects,¹ and recommend the following method of attack: "(a) Gather material and plan the general treatment; (b) read aloud a similar page in Latin and call to mind some of the vocabulary you will need; (c) write the whole rapidly in Latin, leaving blanks, variants, and questionable forms, looking up nothing, and thinking of English as little as possible; (d) revise and verify, reading aloud at intervals. Cast the thought as far as possible into a Latin form but express your meaning exactly even at the cost of errors. Note down idioms for which no Latin equivalent occurs to you".

The class hour can be spent profitably in analyzing a Latin paragraph on a similar subject, discussing the commonest errors in the papers, supplying missing vocabulary, and reading aloud the better themes,

which have first been pruned of any shocking mistakes. Occasionally private interviews are helpful. The members of the class can soon be set free to choose their own subjects, and although other Latin courses naturally yield the most, still hockey, debating, vacation festivities, vivisection, international arbitration, or the style of Walter Pater, will be found attractive and possible. The most advanced students using Latin instead of English for some longer papers required by other teachers¹.

One hears a great deal in these days about the value of oral work in the study of a foreign tongue. Those who teach beginners, if they themselves are able to speak the language, find reform comparatively simple; we in college are still confronted with students trained only in a dead Latin. Yet some of them at least should be learning to talk, and one place to begin is in the composition class. Writing from dictation, reciting the version, listening to themes by others in the class, will pave the way; then, if the instructor uses Latin for all the mechanical business of the recitation and for occasional comments on obvious points, the class will soon understand and begin to respond. Next may come questions on a passage that has been memorized, then on something connected with the day's work. Thus pictures of *toga* and *sagum*, a map of Italy showing the location of Mutina, and a coin of Decimus Brutus will yield much conversation within the powers of young people who are working over the early chapters of the Fourteenth Philippic. Some explanations must of course be given in English, for the sake of clearness or brevity, but a start may be made in speaking, or at any rate hearing, Latin, and that too without slighting other matters. Even poor students sometimes show surprising enthusiasm and quickness in this sort of work.

In conclusion, then, I believe that teachers of Latin composition in college should try above all to emphasize Latin rather than the vernacular, by choosing for translation passages written in clear and natural English, by having good Latin read aloud, analyzed, memorized, and imitated, by requiring conversation and original composition in Latin; they should also teach the life, history, and literature as well as the language of Rome, by using exercises that are interesting and instructive in subject, related to the student's other Latin work and to each other. And finally, in hours of discouragement, the students should be reminded that they do not compose Addisonian English, neither did Cicero's own son write Ciceronian Latin.

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MARY BRADFORD PEAKS.

¹ Some examples are: A Letter to a sick Friend (cf. Cicero's letters to Tiro); The Battle of Bunker Hill (in imitation of Caesar or Livy); An Attack on Caesar for Cruelty Towards the Gauls (cf. invectives in one of the Catilinarian or Philippic orations); The Life of Pliny the Younger; An Autobiography.

¹ For example, such topics as The Historical Allusions in the Fifth Eclogue, The Roman Attitude towards Suicide (1000-2000 words) can be treated successfully by juniors in Vergil and Pliny classes as the equivalent of three or four weekly compositions.